

Reproduction: Making More Disciples

In these lessons on leadership we have listed and discussed four goals of leadership:

- maturity,
- unity,
- ministry, and
- reproduction.

We should remember that everything that has life in it reproduces. As a matter of fact, reproduction is one of the criteria that defines life in biology. Jesus said in John 15:8 to "*bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*" The type of fruit that a disciple produces is that which is after its own kind (Gen 1:24,25), that is, more disciples.

A disciple is produced through the Gospel. As one is born of the seed of the Gospel, it is natural (or should be) that the new life would seek to continue in the Word and so become a disciple. One who produces disciples then becomes a **spiritual father**.

1 Corinthians 4:14-17 NASB

(14) I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.

(15) For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet *you would not have* many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.

(16) Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me.

(17) For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.

A father has a responsibility toward his children to train them in the ways of God. He does this in two ways: he is an example to them and he teaches, instructs, and exhorts them as a father would a beloved son.

In the natural, certain things are required before one can become a father. One must be old enough to reproduce; there is a certain physical maturity that is necessary. And, one should be married (covenanted together). The marriage covenant is necessary to properly raise the child.

In the spiritual realm there are similar requirements. Anyone who ministers the Gospel should be willing to receive those born into the Kingdom under his ministry into a discipleship relationship where he would act as a spiritual father toward them. And he should be in a **committed relationships** himself so that he doesn't raise the children alone.

We live in a time when it is easy to say that we are *believers* and yet live like *agnostics*. This is because our society doesn't put the physical pressure on our beliefs that previous generations had to face. Today, our beliefs are tested in a less obvious manner. In America, no one holds a gun

to your head and says "deny Jesus or die"; instead, your boss asks you to "shade the numbers just a little", or "it was John's responsibility, let him take the fall." Everyday, people deny Jesus by their agnostic actions, even though they profess Him as Lord on Sunday morning.

Why? Because they are spiritual children living without a father's oversight. With no father to warn them, instruct them, be an example for them, then, it is no wonder that they live for their own convenience.

Today, the Spirit is bringing an emphasis to Fatherhood, both of God and of the believer. The decline of fatherhood in the natural has made it even more important that spiritual fathers be brought forth. I believe that this is part of what is spoken of by the prophets:

Malachi 4:5-6 NASB

(5) "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.

(6) "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."

Luke 1:17 NASB

(17) "It is he who will go *as a forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

I believe that spiritual fathers turning their hearts toward their spiritual children will produce a people prepared for the Lord. The overall purpose of discipleship is to raise up fathers.

God's pattern of reproduction is fathers teaching children who become fathers who teach their children, etc. This is especially true of our experiences with God.

Deuteronomy 4:9 NASB

(9) "Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.

PATTERN OF REPRODUCTION IN THE CHURCH

Jesus produced disciples to reproduce ministry. When He ascended He made sure that this would continue by giving gifts (ministers) to the Church.

Ephesians 4:11-12 NASB

(11) And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,

(12) for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

God intends that all ministry be **self-reproducing**. The key ministries for reproduction are

apostles and *elders*. We shall see how the apostolic ministry is first brought forth and how it in turn produces the elders; and how the elders, then reproduce apostles. To see this, let's look at three New Testament cities: Antioch, Lystra and Ephesus.

Acts 13:1-3 NASB

- (1) Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.
- (2) While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."
- (3) Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

Five men are named here including Barnabas and Paul. All five held the ministry of prophets or teachers.

Barnabas and Paul were sent forth from Antioch. While in Antioch they were prophets and teachers, after being sent forth they were called apostles (Acts 14:4,14). This is phase one of the church reproductive cycle: out of the fellowship in a local congregation the mobile ministry of apostles is born. True spiritual birth of this kind comes only from fellowship.

In the course of their journey they twice visited the city of Lystra. On the second visit they "ordained elders" in the church in Lystra (Acts 14:21-23). This is phase two of the church reproductive cycle: within a local congregation apostles ordain elders. Elders then assume responsibility for the leadership of that congregation.

After completing the journey, Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch and report to the congregation which originally sent them forth (Acts 14:26-28). Later Paul is sent forth a second time from the congregation at Antioch and takes Silas with him (Acts 15:40). Prior to being sent forth with Paul, Silas was already recognized as a prophet (Acts 15:32).

The first few verses of Acts 16 tell us what happened when Paul came to Lystra.

Acts 16:1-4 NASB

- (1) Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek,
- (2) and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.
- (3) Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.
- (4) Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe.

Timothy had obtained his first degree toward ministry: he was recommended by the leaders of his own local congregation. If you cannot live the Christian life under the scrutiny of a local assembly, then you have no business exporting your life to others. I believe that no one has the right to step out into ministry who does not start in this manner.

What did Silas become when he was "sent forth" from Antioch, and Timothy when he was "sent forth" from Lystra? The answer is in 1 Thessalonians. This epistle was written jointly by the three men named in the salutation: "Paul, Silvanus (Silas), and Timotheus (Timothy)." They describe themselves as the apostles of Christ (1 Thess. 2:6). By being sent forth, Silas, like Paul, was approved to move from functioning as a prophet to functioning as an apostle.

Timothy became an apostle by being sent forth from his local assembly in Lystra. Timothy received his commission from the elders in Lystra (1 Tim 4:14). Paul also laid hands on him (2 Tim. 1:6). I would imagine that this scenario was something similar to what happened in Antioch. A prophecy came forth concerning Timothy being sent forth. The elders concurred and together with Paul and Silas laid their hands on him to commission him and send him forth with the senior apostles. This is the scriptural pattern: the beginner works with those who are experienced in the ministry.

In their later phases of ministry together, Paul and Timothy came to Ephesus where they ministered for some time. Paul eventually went on and left Timothy there to finish some work (1 Tim. 1:3). One of Timothy's main responsibilities was to appoint elders (1 Tim. 3:1-10; 5:17-22).

On another occasion Paul left Titus in Crete with the similar responsibility of appointing elders (Titus 1:5-9).

Timothy, as an apostle, has come to Ephesus, and has there appointed elders to the congregation. Now the way is open for the next apostolic ministry to be sent forth by the elders in Ephesus.

APPLICATION TODAY

The two key ministries to reproduction are apostles and elders. If we study the New Testament objectively, we discover that there is more said about apostles and elders than about all of the other ministries combined. How are apostolic ministries initially brought forth? They are birthed out of prophets and teachers, fellowshiping together and ministering to the Lord in prayer and fasting (Acts 13:1-5). This has important, practical application to us today. *If we are prepared to recognize in the church today the ministries of prophets and teachers, then out of these there is a scriptural way for God to bring forth apostolic ministries that fulfill all of the requirements of the New Testament.*